(New Westminster, 1866)

SPEECH OF

HIS HONOR THE OFFICER ADMINISTERING THE GOVERNMENT AT THE OPENING OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,

ON THURSDAY THE 18TH JANUARY, 1866.

Honorable Gentlemen of the Legislative Council:

It is with feelings of no ordinary interest and satisfaction that I meet you to-day, and have recourse to your advice and assistance in promoting the welfare of this Colony.

Of the twenty-eight Ordinances passed by this Council during the late Session twenty-three have received Her Majesty's approval. Her Majesty has been pleased to disallow the Ordinance to declare the limitation of Foreign Suits and Actions. The Secretary of State has suggested certain alterations in the Ordinance in Aid of the Trustees Relief Act before it can receive the Royal assent. This Ordinance, in the amended shape, will be laid before you. A decision on the Ordinance respecting Marriages in British Columbia, and on the Supply Ordinance, is deferred. I have received no intimation of the Secretary of State's views on the Ordinance to amend the Duties of Customs.

I shall take an early opportunity of laying before you copies of Despatches from the Secretary of State in reply to the Resolutions adopted by this Council on subjects relating to Naval Protection, the Expenditure incurred by the Colony on account of the Expedition against the Chilicoten Indians, and the claim made by the Imperial Government for repayment of the cost of erecting the Buildings at the Camp lately occupied by the Detachment of the Royal Engineers.

Unforeseen obstacles have retarded the Government in carrying out the Resolution, adopted by this Council, as regards the Survey of Pre-empted Lands throughout the Colony. Arrangements are, however, in progress which will, I trust, enable the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works to undertake this work without further delay. Measures will, at the same time, be taken to alter the present unsatisfactory system of Indian Reserves. I am in no way convinced of the necessity of any Legislative enactment for this purpose. In all matters connected with the Native Race a large discretionary power must necessarily, in my opinion, be left in the hands of the Executive.

A Statement of the Votes required to cover Expenditure incurred during the past year, for which a previous Vote has not been taken, will be laid before you in a Supplementary Estimate, together with a detailed account of the actual Revenue and Expenditure. The Votes taken for the Public Service of the year 1865 amounted to £225,946, and, as near as can be ascertained at this early period of the year, the total Expenditure, embracing the Supplementary Estimates, to £185,000.

You will be prepared for the announcement I have to make to you that the Revenue falls short of the Estimate by a considerable amount. That Estimate, as you are aware, was based on the supposition that a large immigration would take place to the newly discovered mines in the Kootenay District. The counter attractions offered by fresh discoveries in the neighbouring Territory left this District comparatively deserted. The main items, however, under which the Estimate has proved in excess of the actual Revenue are the Gold Export Tax and the Road Toll Receipts. The Estimate for the amount to be derived from Road Tolls was based on the Revenue obtained from the same source in the two previous years. The cause of the great falling off must be attributed partly to the extreme severity of the winter, which prevented communication with our Northern Mines, and retarded the general traffic of the Country until the month of May, and partly in consequence of the Ordinance passed by this Council, late in the last Session, allowing farm produce to be exempt from Road Tolls. The loss to the Revenue by this exemption is a subject for congratulation rather than otherwise, as it is an evidence of the increasing amount of produce now raised by the Settlers in the Upper Country.

With much satisfaction, I refer you to the Public Works undertaken during the past year. The main waggon road is now completed to the very centre of the Cariboo District. Communication between the towns of Richfield and Camerontown is facilitated by the formation of a road. A substantial Pack Trail has been constructed, by way of the Southern Boundary, to the Kootenay District—or rather, I might say, to the Rocky Mountains—a distance estimated at three hundred and eighty miles from the town of Hope. The Country lying between the Fraser and the Columbia has been carefully surveyed, and a trail is already opened to connect the Columbia River with the navigable waters of the Shuswap Lake. Several Exploration parties have been fitted out by Government, and large tracts of Country explored, with what varied success you are already aware from the Reports which have from time

to time appeared in the *Government Gazette*. A Light Ship has been built and is stationed at the entrance to the Fraser River. Substantial Iron Buoys having arrived from England will shortly be placed in position clearly to define the channel. The construction of a Waggon Road between New Westminster and Yale is nearly completed, having been undertaken in conjunction with the Western Union Telegraph Company, whose line of Telegraph following this route has already penetrated upwards of four hundred miles into the Interior, and will, I trust, should the same energy be displayed as heretofore, place us in Telegraphic communication with the whole civilized world before the close of another season.

The Estimates of expected Revenue, and proposed Expenditure for the present year, will be laid before you without delay. Fully impressed with the necessity of retrenchment, you will find that considerable reductions have been made in the Establishments to the extent of nearly $30,000, without I trust, unduly weakening the efficiency of the Public Service. A portion of this reduction will however be absorbed in new Offices, which it has been necessary to create, such as those connected with the Light Ship.

You will find the Estimates contemplate a large outlay in the construction of roads and trails to facilitate access to the new mining district of the Columbia. Fully persuaded that you will agree with me, in the importance of opening communication with the upper Columbia, for the early spring traffic, I have already sanctioned the construction of a waggon road from the main trunk line at Cache Creek to Savane's Ferry, and arrangements have been entered into for a Steamer to be in readiness for the navigation of the Kamloops and Shuswap Lakes, at once placing the new Gold Fields of the Upper Columbia within easy and cheap access of the Fraser River. The expenses connected with these undertakings will be found in the Estimates. An appropriation will also be asked for opening a route to the newly discovered Gold Diggings on the upper branches of the Bridge River.

It is with great reluctance that I propose to you the abolition of the Duty on the Export of Gold. Of the justice and equity of the Tax, I am as fully convinced as when in this Council I strongly advocated the measure, and I should now hesitate to take this step did I not consider it to be the paramount duty of the Executive to carry out as far as possible the well understood wishes of the Community. I cannot but observe that from various causes a large majority of the people of British Columbia formerly in favor, are now opposed to this mode of taxation. Admitting this, I am confident I only carry out the wishes of the Governor in taking this course; to use His Excellency's own words—"The last thing the "Government of this Colony would desire to do, is to discourage the "miners from developing its resources, or allow any portion of our popu-"lation to lapse into a state of political discontent."

The public works which I think you will agree with me as absolutely necessary to be undertaken in promotion of the progress and welfare of the Colony, oblige me to propose to you additional taxation to meet the loss which will accrue to the Revenue by the abolition of the Gold Tax. Following out the recommendation of the Mining Board, I advise that the Mining Licence be made compulsory on all employed in Mining pursuits. Her Majesty's "Instructions" forbid any restrictions being placed on "persons of African, Asiatic, or Indian birth, to which persons of European birth or descent are not subjected or made liable." It is therefore only by this measure that our large Chinese population can be made to contribute to the Revenue in equal proportion to the white race. Few Chinamen now take out a Mining Licence, whereas on the other hand few white miners are to be found without one.

I further suggest for your consideration the propriety of increasing the Trade and Liquor Licences throughout the Colony.

Should you agree with me in the expediency of abolishing the duty on the Export of Gold, there will be no means left to the Executive to obtain any statistical information of the annual yield of Gold, a matter I consider of much importance. I therefore invite you to consider whether some system of Registration might not be adopted for this object not liable to the same objections as those brought forward against the Gold Export Tax.

The Postal Service requires your attentive consideration. Tenders for the conveyance of the Mails during the present year have been called for by Public Notice, and when received will be laid before you. It will be for you to consider whether the Revenue justifies a bi-weekly service to our Northern Mines, especially at a time when I believe you are unanimous in the opinion that it is incumbent upon the Government to provide direct Steam communication with San Francisco. The establishment of direct Steam communication is a matter of the utmost importance. I am now in correspondence on this subject, and trust to be able to make satisfactory arrangements before the commencement of the spring traffic.

The material interests, and the permanent stability of the Colony are dependent on a fixed population. I would invite your earnest attention to the best

means to adopt for introducing and fostering the immigration of a class of Settlers likely to make this country their home. The opening of new and extensive mining and agricultural districts during the past season, and also of different lines of access to them, offer many and favorable inducements for settlement hitherto unknown. The experience of the last year has clearly shown that the agricultural lands of this Colony are well adapted for the cultivation of cereals and vegetables of all descriptions, and large tracts of the best lands are fortunately most favorably situated for the supply of the principal Mining districts.

I am aware that a numerously signed Petition will shortly be presented to you, emanating from Miners and Traders in the Cariboo District, praying that some alteration may be made in the Mining Laws "to provide for the speedy hearing and determining of all disputes concerning Mining interests." I fully agree with the Petitioners that the present expensive system of litigation is "productive of great injury to the general welfare, progress, and development "of the whole mining interests of the Colony." A considerable portion of our last Session was occupied in consolidating and amending the Mining Laws, more especially with a view to remedy the evil of which the Petitioners complain, the Draft Ordinance introduced with this object having been framed under the immediate superintendence of the Mining Board of Cariboo. Although I still believe the Laws at present in force are capable of meeting every requirement, I shall be anxious to give my most attentive consideration to any suggestions you may wish to offer on this important subject, when the Petition is before you.

The Law relating to the Pilotage of Vessels within the waters of British Columbia requires immediate alteration. A Bill with this object will be laid before you.

I shall take the opportunity as the Session progresses of bringing other measures of importance before you by Message.

The absence of crime in the past year is worthy of more than a passing notice. During the extended circuit of the Supreme Court, only two white men were convicted on criminal charges, and the Indian population throughout the Colony has been, I rejoice to say, peaceable and orderly.

Reflecting on the extent and number of our resources so largely added to by the discoveries of the past year, and day by day being developed, I recognize on every side subjects for congratulation and thankfulness, and confidently hope that the year which has just dawned upon us will be one of unusual success. I earnestly invite your cordial co-operation in the passage of those measures best calculated to promote the prosperity of the country, and I fervently trust that He who holds the destiny of nations in the hollow of His Hand will guide our deliberations to a happy issue.